Canada's biggest carbon footprint?

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Body

We see him here, we see him there, we see him damn near everywhere. Justin Trudeau has got to have Canada's biggest carbon footprint. Since May 1, by calculations based on his official daily itinerary and an internet distance-between-two-points app, he has flown more than 38,000 kilometres. That's just 2,000 km less than Earth's circumference. Around the world in 38 days. They could make a movie.

Fasten your seatbelt and put your trays in the upright position. Here's how it went, starting May 1: From Ottawa to Windsor. Back to Ottawa. Then to Montreal for Guy Lafleur's funeral. Back to Ottawa. Then to Toronto and Hamilton. Back to Ottawa. Then off to Kyiv for the much sought-after "shoulder-to-shoulder" photo op with Volodomyr Zelenskyy (though given height differences it was more shoulder-to-ear lobes). Then to Irpin, Ukraine, I guess to be completely sure the war damage they show on CNN isn't faked. Then to Rzeszów, Poland. Back to Ottawa. After a whole week in Ottawa, off to St. John's. Back to Ottawa. Then to Sept-Iles. Back to Ottawa. Then to Kamloops, Metro Vancouver and Saskatoon. Back to Ottawa. Then off to Nova Scotia for three days of personal time. Back to Ottawa. Then to Siksika, Alta. Back to Ottawa. Then London, Ont. Back to Ottawa. And now, this week: to Colorado Springs and Los Angeles. Phew. I'm tired just listing it all. And you certainly have to give the PM credit for all the time he must spend in airport lineups and filling out his ArriveCAN info. Air travel is such a nightmare these days, isn't it? A number of the domestic trips were to deliver big federal cheques. In Ottawa they seem not to realize that these days cheques, even big ones, can be delivered electronically - though maybe that's something else the Phoenix system can't do right.

"Rules for thee but not for me" is one of the dominant memes of the age. Or is it a trope? I can never remember the difference. Whichever it is, it resonates with all of us who aren't high and mighty. It even resonates with some who are - British Tory MPs, for instance, 148 of whom voted this week that Boris Johnson should lose his job as prime minister for ignoring the pandemic rules the government he leads was imposing on ordinary Britons. While the British state was arresting people for gathering outdoors in twos and threes and preventing grieving children from burying parents who had succumbed to COVID or anything else, Johnson regularly attended staff gatherings at which people partied and drank - in some cases drank themselves silly or sick.

No one sensible should oppose partying, including moderate drinking and other forms of conviviality, but it's always rich when those devising rules should regard themselves as exempt from them. The problem is not the actual acts, which were largely harmless, even in a pandemic, it's the hauteur and hypocrisy. For reasons that aren't at all complex or sophisticated, people resent it deeply.

Who is Canada's most committed climate crusader, apart from David Suzuki? OK, probably Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault, Greenpeace activist and founder and former head of Equiterre. But who recruited and appointed Guilbeault? Whose government imposed a carbon tax and shut down pipelines? And who has been meeting with

climate-messiah Greta Thunberg and himself preaching - far, wide, loudly and often - about the need for a rapid global transition away from fossil fuels, including those used to power airplanes? That's probably enough clues. The answer is obviously Justin Trudeau.

And yet Canada's most committed climate crusader flies almost around the world in just 38 days. Who else in Canada could have a larger carbon footprint? Is that not a scandal worthy of a "gate"? Travel-gate? Guzzler-gate? Bigfoot-gate? BS-gate? No doubt after every trip the Trudeaus plant a tree in the backyard of Rideau Cottage. It must be heavily forested by now. One online app says that if you fly 15 people - 15 being the biggest group it allows - from Ottawa to Colorado Springs, where the PM was Tuesday, you need to plant 18 trees to offset your footprint - 36 trees return - though I assume the app assumes you're flying commercial, not in your own government jet.

Not all the trips the prime minister takes are political or personal. Some - a few, one or two, maybe - are for important reasons of state and probably couldn't be done so well on Zoom.

But we all have good reasons for the trips we want to take. And in many cases those reasons aren't at all frivolous. Yet he gets to fly seemingly as often as he wants while we are taxed for flying and on top of that made to feel ashamed of the damage we're doing to the environment.

"Do as I say, not as I do" is an even older conceit than "Rules for thee but not for me." We all learned as children how wrong it was. For some people the lesson didn't take. !@COPYRIGHT=© 2022 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

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